

VANCOUVER 2010 THE TORCH RELAY » DAY 39

Chemotherapy won't keep her down

Despite cancer drugs that numb her fingers, 17-year-old will carry the flame to bring awareness to charity founded in her name

BY SONIA VERMA MONTREAL

After this week, Sarah Cook will pull on a special white track suit and red mittens and hoist the Olympic torch for 300 metres along one of Montreal's most fashionable streets.

Her biggest fear about the flame? "That I will drop it on St. Denis [Street]," the 17-year-old says, while nestled yesterday in a reading chair in her family's cozy home.

The problem isn't teenage nerves: It's the cancer drugs that make her toes and fingers numb.

Ms. Cook has just returned from the Montreal Children's Hospital, where she received her last round of chemotherapy before she embarks on her stretch of the torch relay.

She is pale. A Burberry scarf is snug around her neck, her nails have just been polished and she is smiling.

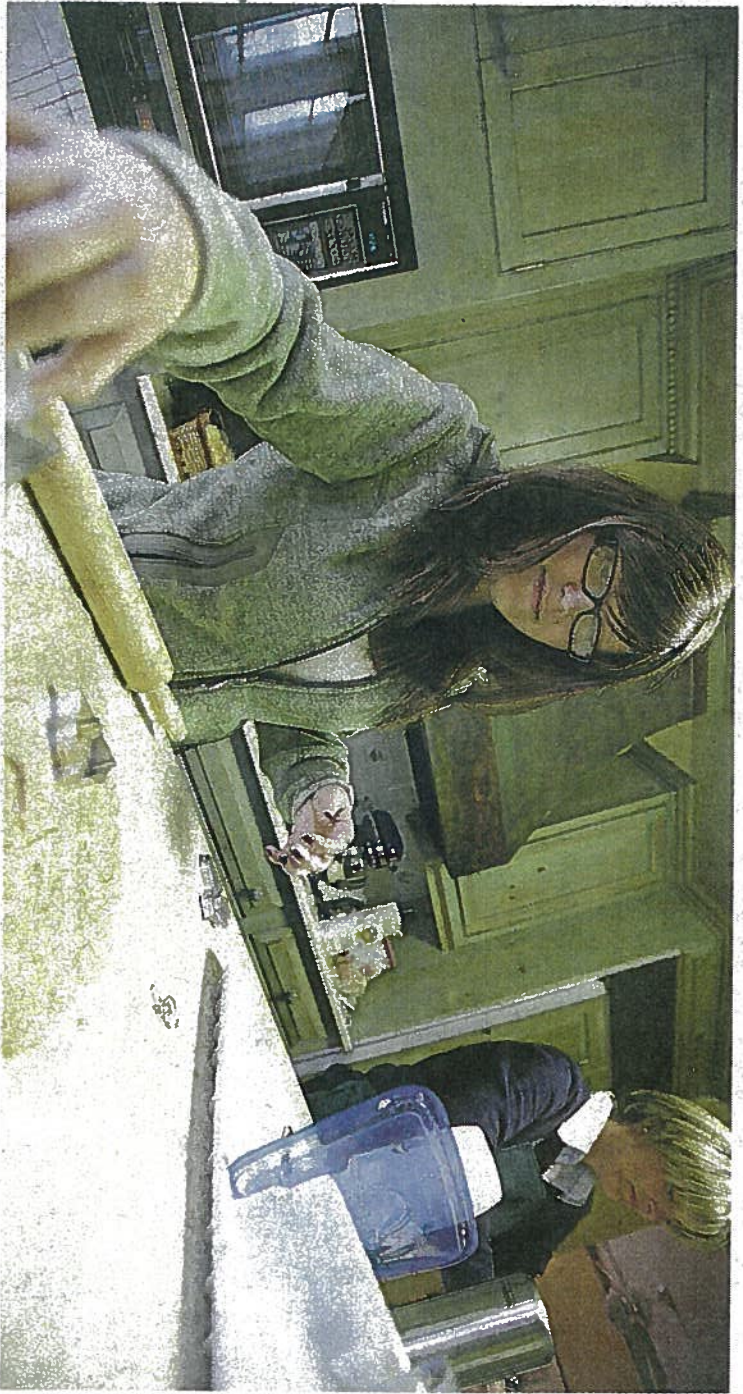
"They told us the torch weighs just three pounds, and the gloves have grips, so she should be fine," says her mother, Lorena. "She'll be walking, not running."

"One leg is smaller than the other and it's also a little bit shorter," Sarah Cook explains. A section of fibula was removed from her left leg when she was initially diagnosed with Ewing's sarcoma at the age of 8.

"I wasn't a runner before either, but now with the pain and numbness in my joints, it will definitely be a walk."

After seven years of tennis, Ms. Cook's cancer returned. A set of X-rays taken after her high-school graduation revealed a tumour the size of a golf ball, behind her sternum, attached to her lung.

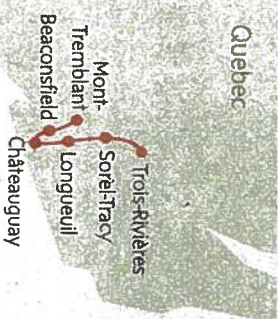
Ms. Cook was preparing to leave for a year abroad, studying at Neuchâtel, a junior college in Switzerland. She was also supposed to travel to Chlona with her father, Norman. Instead, doctors operated to remove the tumour last August



Sarah Cook bakes with her mother, Lorena. They've compiled a cookbook to raise money for cancer support. DEBORAH BALC/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

LIGHT BRIGADE

DAYS 39, 40 & 41



Globe and Mail journalists will follow the Olympic Torch Relay every step of the way, painting a compelling portrait of Canada as they go.

IN DEPTH, ONLINE



- Track each step of the torch relay
- » Interactive map of the journey
- » Day-by-day photo galleries
- » Share your relay stories
- » Watch the run live, 24/7, with every moment broadcast on the Olympic torch cam at olympics.ca

and prescribed an aggressive program of chemotherapy.

"It was hard to accept in the beginning but I wanted to just move on. I was upset, but I wouldn't let this ruin my life," Ms. Cook says.

Since she was diagnosed, she keeps up with her studies by attending classes every morning before heading to the hospital for treatment.

Last summer, a family friend nominated her to become a torchbearer. In September, her mother received word that Ms. Cook had been selected.

"She wasn't feeling that great and was lying in bed when I got the e-mail, so I read it to her," Lorena recalls. "She just got this glow in her eyes and they were sparkling. Her whole face lit up."

Ms. Cook says she hoped her involvement would, in part, help to raise awareness about the Sarah Cook Fund of the Cedars Cancer Institute for Children. The fund was founded by her parents after she was diag-

nosed with cancer as a child.

Initially, the money was used to buy small things, to make the cancer ward at the Montreal Children's Hospital more comfortable for patients and their families. The fund purchased new pillows and phones. Eventually it helped renovate all 13 rooms on the floor.

Over the years, the charity grew, raising more than \$4.5-million to date. It now funds everything from oncology research to art therapy.

At one point during her recent treatment, Ms. Cook's kidneys failed and she was hospitalized for 10 days - staying in the children's ward that her fund helped create.

Her participation in the torch relay has helped highlight the work.

"It's done great things for the fund. The reason I am carrying the torch is to help people understand that they can make a difference in whatever they care about," says Ms. Cook.

Mohawk peacekeepers to replace RCMP

The Olympic flame will way through a Mohawk near Montreal today with traditional RCMP escort. The flame is scheduled through Kahnawake arc day and will be accompanied by Mohawk peacekeepers. Residents had voiced their pleasure with a possible presence in the community. They had raised the possibility of disrupting the event by access to the Mounties, regarded by some in the community as a foreign police force.

The RCMP is responsible of the flame and it across Canada. But a statement from a committee late yesterday said that peacekeepers would "operational assistance" during today's through the community Montreal.

A spokesman for the Council of Kahnawake, a political body in the territory confirmed the second RCMP role.

"We are a go," said spokeswoman.

"The issue has been and the RCMP will not be patting."

The deal was well received by the members of the community who were excited about the flame relay but concerned about the RCMP role.

"We are delighted that the members of Kahnawake will be able to join together to celebrate the Olympic torch relay," said Tewanee Joseph, president of the Four Host First Nations.

"The Olympic Flame's country journey would be complete without a visit to Kahnawake, an important First Nations community."

The flame will be in Kahnawake for about 15 minutes among the torch bearers. Alwyn Morris, a community member and Olympic goalist in 1984. The Canadian